

**Remarks of Lt. Governor Becky Skillman at the Naturalization Ceremony at
President Benjamin Harrison Home in Indianapolis
July 2, 2010**

Thank you Judge Sarah Evans Barker. It's great to be back at the President Benjamin Harrison home. A few years ago my family had our photo taken here for our Holiday Greeting Card. More importantly this is a beautiful setting for your first moments as American citizens.

I can feel the pride and excitement. And I'm especially proud you have chosen to live in Indiana, and as you become Americans you become Hoosiers at the same time!

Now many of you have been in this state for several years, so you may know some of the quirks that make our state unique. Remember that the City of South Bend is in the north. The City of North Vernon is in the south. We love sugar cream pie, tenderloins, basketball and racing. And we have our own way of pronouncing things, especially names of small towns - Versailles, Russiaville.

I once traveled to the town of Vevay, Indiana. On the way we couldn't remember whether it was pronounced "Ve-VAY" or "Ve-VEE". So we pulled into a restaurant and I asked the manager, "Could you please slowly tell me where we are right now?" He gave me a funny look and said, "Dairy Queen."

We are proud of what we've built here in Indiana. And every person who joins our Hoosier family adds a little more flavor to our piece of America.

With the fourth of July almost here, I envy the celebration you have ahead of you. Your first Independence Day as an American citizen will be one you'll never forget, and one your families will remember for generations. Your citizenship sets a wonderful example for all. It says that you value the freedom and opportunity this country stands for.

For those of us who were born here and have enjoyed citizenship all our lives, it's easy to take it for granted. But we enjoy a wealth of rights and privileges as American citizens. And I for one am grateful for the reminder today to be thankful for the immense blessings we have as Americans.

It's a lot easier to be an American than to become an American. You've all waited a long time for this day and you have worked hard toward this day. Gaining citizenship is quite an achievement, and I'm proud to be here to share it with you.

But this is only the beginning of your life as an American. Much like a wedding day, the point isn't the pomp and circumstance or even the celebration, the point is a new and lasting relationship.

Today you are giving your allegiance to this country. It's the beginning of a new relationship. You're no longer just visiting, you are home.

The land of free, home of the brave – it's now your home too. It all boils down to one thing: freedom. When you leave here today, you will have the freedom to live as you choose. To put down roots and not feel any fear that you might be asked to leave. You can vote and engage in your community in a whole new way. You can take opportunities, even opportunities abroad, and know your American passport will bring you home again.

I can't think of anything that would make you feel more free than to be finished with all the immigration forms, tests and interviews. It's done!

This is the first day of the rest of your lives. This country and this state are full of opportunity for you. Now you have the freedom to make the most of it.

American citizenship means many things to many people, but I must borrow the words of a recently nationalized citizen from Taiwan who said, "Today I am an American Citizen and it means everything."

So it's my pleasure to welcome you as citizens of America and citizens of Indiana. Congratulations, and God bless our country and this great state!